



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Leslye Corsiglia

**SUBJECT: HOMELESS RESPONSE TEAM
RAPID RE-HOUSING STATUS
REPORT**

DATE: September 23, 2013

Approved

Date

10/1/13

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee (NSE) accept this report on the efforts to initiate a place-based rapid re-housing pilot program.

BACKGROUND

The Fiscal Year 2013-14 Budget included a \$2 million appropriation for a rapid re-housing and supportive services strategy to permanently house as many homeless individuals with a history of sustained San Jose residency as possible. In addition, an earmarked reserve of \$2 million is included in the FY 2014-15 budget, pending funding availability.

The budget also included \$1,670,000 for encampment clean-up work (another \$1,670,000 is in reserve for FY 2013-14). Many homeless individuals have established a fear or resistance to traditional services due to systematic failures or restrictive structures and rules. As a result, a majority of homeless residents feel that living in the unsafe and unsanitary conditions of an encampment is still preferable to the existing shelter resources. However, we have found that regular encampment clean-ups, communicated well in advance of the actual work, reinforce the City's message that we, as a community, will not accept that anyone should have to live in such dangerous environments. Outreach workers are clearly articulating this message to encampment residents, helping them consider alternative options.

HOMELESS CENSUS

During the 2013 biennial homeless census and survey conducted in January, census workers found 4,770 homeless individuals in San Jose. For the City, this represents a 16% increase from the number identified in the 2011 census, when 4,034 individuals were counted. Out of the total 4,770 persons, 77% were living in creeks, riverbeds, in cars or other vehicles, or on the street.

On a per capita basis, this gives San Jose one of the largest unsheltered populations of any major city in the United States.

Surveyors counted 1,230 unsheltered individuals living in encampments, representing 26% of the total homeless population. The encampment subpopulation exhibits a unique set of demographics from the rest of the homeless community: they are older, have been homeless for a longer period of time, and are more likely to be former San Jose residents. In fact, 91% of the encampment homeless reported living in the City at the time they lost their housing. Moreover, 96% of those surveyed also stated that they would willingly accept permanent housing over encampment living, if resources were made available.

RAPID RE-HOUSING PILOT

The willingness of encampment residents to accept permanent housing, coupled with the vulnerability of the subpopulation, their former City residency, and the significant community impact of encampments, make this group of homeless individuals a strong match for a rapid re-housing demonstration project.

Utilizing existing data from the recent homeless census, the Housing 1000 survey¹, and onsite nonprofit partner assessments conducted in July and August, staff have identified a potential encampment site for a place-based demonstration project that will seek to:

- (1) Provide a measurable reduction of the overall unsheltered homeless population;
- (2) Reduce the impact of the target site on the environment and surrounding neighborhoods; and
- (3) Leverage existing community resources.

While we are still in the process of identifying specific partner agencies, accessing additional external resources, and identifying housing units, the implementation of this plan consists of several key efforts:

Site Selection

The \$2 million available this year, when added to other resources, including housing assistance from the County, can assist approximately 100 encampment residents. As such, we have selected a site to target that has significant impact on the community, the environment, and the health and safety of both the homeless residents and the surrounding neighborhood as a whole. The site is also easily accessible for service providers, law enforcement, and encampment abatement crews, allowing the project to provide its full complement of programming and services to ensure the restoration of the area and the complete provision of services to those in need and ready to receive support. The exact location of the encampment will not be released

¹ This survey – a part of the regional Housing 1000 campaign – is conducted on an ongoing basis by outreach workers throughout the City to identify extremely vulnerable homeless individuals in need of immediate housing and support.

publicly until the completion of the project to avoid client oversubscription of support and housing services due to the limited number of people that can be served through this effort.

Strategic Targeting

The existence of encampments is primarily a symptom of the much larger issue of homelessness. As such, to have a lasting and meaningful impact at a given site, a combination of services and housing is required. The rapid re-housing approach will target two specific homeless sub-populations: chronic and transitional.

With existing infrastructure for services and housing for the chronic sub-population already in place through Housing 1000 and the Care Coordination Project, the Housing Department sought City Council approval to augment the existing Destination: Home contract in September to hire two new Intensive Case Managers. The goal of this first stage of the pilot is to move 30-40 of the most vulnerable individuals out of the encampment within a 90-120 day window. As these clients are chronically homeless and most likely incapable of long-term self-sufficiency, the City has also been working with the County and Destination: Home to secure permanent subsidies through the County's new Measure A Permanent Supportive Housing Fund.

For transitionally homeless individuals—those who are more likely to be able to live independently once sheltered—the Housing Department will release an RFP by the end of September to seek a lead agency to provide case management and job development services to transitionally homeless persons identified as residents of the targeted San Jose encampment. Transitionally homeless individuals are typically those with behavioral and/or criminal justice system involvement which exacerbates their homeless episode. The ultimate goal for the transitionally homeless population is economic self-sufficiency. The population will include individual adults, transition-aged youth, formerly incarcerated adults, and other sub-populations capable of long term economic stability, preferably through employment.

Case Management

Case management will be a critical component of this model. Case managers will be expected to serve as the assigned participant's single point of contact for all support services necessary to attain and maintain housing beginning with a relationship in the targeted encampment. While the City may offer a housing subsidy for up to two years, it is expected that the transitionally homeless participants will retain permanent housing after the subsidy is terminated. An employment strategy and potentially a job development staff position will also be necessary in order to ensure access to workforce development training and viable employment opportunities that ultimately lead to economic stability for the participants.

Securing Units

One of the key barriers that all of the homeless clients in this pilot will face is access to housing. Even with the provision of case management and subsidies, the extremely competitive nature of the current rental market environment has made it very difficult for homeless individuals exiting encampments to enter into housing. For example, according to a Housing 1000 survey of clients

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in August 2013, 110 homeless clients are still unable to locate and secure housing despite having a permanent voucher in hand.

To address this challenge for this pilot, the Housing Department has worked with affordable housing developers to get them to agree to set aside units in their developments, as they become available, for the homeless. Additionally, the Department released a Homeless Housing NOFA on September 1. The NOFA will utilize \$4.0M in existing bond funds to provide conditional grants to acquire, construct, and rehabilitate housing units or beds that serve homeless individuals and/or small families. In exchange for this funding, developers and landlords will agree to provide unit access for clients participating in the rapid re-housing program. The City will also provide case management, move-in costs, and short-term subsidies to help transitionally homeless adults and families access the units in accordance with the rapid re-housing model. It is important to note that while this NOFA solves a market challenge for clients participating in the pilot program, the lack of affordable options and vacant units remains a significant roadblock for the majority of the homeless population in San Jose. As such, Housing Department staff will continue to work with developers and landlords to secure a greater number of units dedicated to homeless individuals.

Lead Staff Person

The Housing Department created a temporary assignment for an existing staff member to serve as the Project Lead for the entire process. This position will ensure full coordination of case management, subsidies, and housing units throughout the duration of the pilot project.

NEXT STEPS

Staff is currently working on steps through the above mentioned RFP and NOFA processes to implement the demonstration project. A lead agency has already been selected by Destination: Home to provide the case management for chronically homeless adults living at the target site. By November, staff anticipates the selection of another lead agency to develop the strategy to serve transitionally homeless individuals. The selected agency or agencies will then initiate their service provision plan(s). While it may take time to secure the necessary housing units to house all of the encampment residents, it is anticipated that clients from the target encampment will be able to begin transitioning into housing by the end of the calendar year.

/s/

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For questions, please contact Ray Bramson, Homelessness Response
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